

HOLIDAY PARTIES





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 Solpourri Press

Greensboro, North Carolina 27419-9566

Printed in U.S.A.

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Introduction

During the holidays people are almost universally happy and in a mood to celebrate. There's a marvelous warmth in the air no matter how cold the climate. Despite our best intentions, however, and our good resolutions "to keep Christmas in our heart all year", that magic feeling of love and joy seems to fade away when the holidays are over, not to be re-born until the following December. But because it's so wonderful while it lasts, I try to savour every minute of it. . .to gather friends and loved ones close around me and bask in the shared happiness of the season. For me the best way to do this is to have parties. I love to give the first one of the season — on Thanksgiving weekend — and the very last one — on Twelfth-night. Some years we have many parties; other years, circumstances limit us to one or two. But we always find entertaining easier and more fun during the holidays than at any other time of the year.

For one thing, our home looks its very prettiest then. Other people do spring and fall house cleaning. I "Christmas-clean" because I love things to be sparkling during the holidays. (My husband says that I chose to be married in December because we were planning a home wedding and I knew that the house would be at its best. While there's a good deal of truth in his observation, I still think Christmas is the perfect time for a wedding, as well as a party.) Through the years there have been times when I skipped the thorough cleaning because of illness, the press of work or family emergencies. But nothing has ever kept me

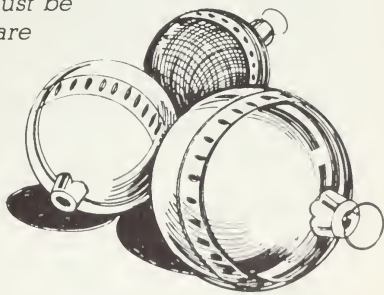
from decorating the house. The boxes of Christmas things are like a trip through memory lane. Each tree ornament, each special decoration is a reminder — some of my childhood and family, some of good friends, still others of trips or special events they commemorate. They are all very special and, like a coat of paint, they cover a multitude of faults such as worn furniture or faded wallpaper. Once everything is in place, we dim the lights, turn on the tree, light the candles and sit back to admire the transformation of our rather plain home into a Christmas wonderland and to say, as we do each year, "It really does look the prettiest it ever has!"

Food seems easier and more fun to prepare during the holidays, too. There are so many traditional dishes that planning a menu for a party is easier than ever. The reverse side of that coin is that it's a great time to use some of your new and more unusual recipes because people love the unexpected surprise to their taste buds.

During the holidays, almost anything will serve as an "excuse" to have a party and there are few rules. You can have large groups or small. The food can be elaborate or simple. You can have a formal affair with engraved invitations, a decorator to "do" the house and a caterer to "do" the food (though I think it's more fun, and far more satisfying to do your own). . . or you can ask, on the spur of the moment, a few friends by for coffee and cake to celebrate the successful final rehearsal of the church Christmas program. I've devoted this book to a group of specific holiday parties that have been a part of tradition for my family or friends at various times through the years. Perhaps the food we've prepared at times will give you ideas as you plan your own parties. I hope so, for I'd love to think that in some small way we become a part of your holiday happiness.

Though I don't believe entertaining must be formal (far from it!), I do believe there are certain "rules" you can follow to ensure successful holiday parties.

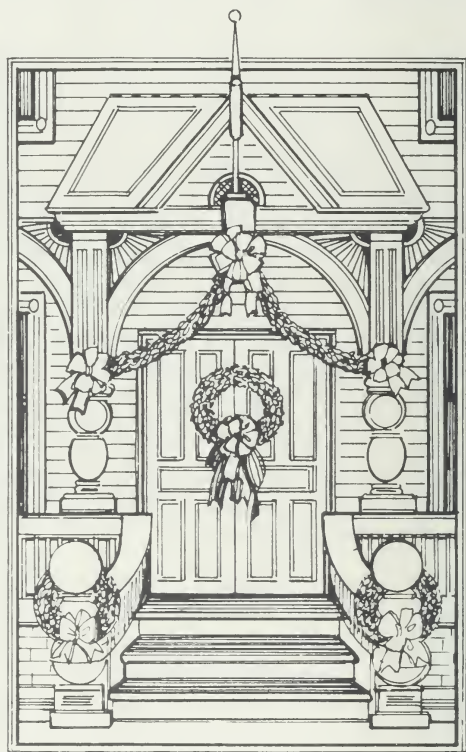
First, do what you can afford to do and what is comfortable for you. It's no fun having a lavish party so far beyond your normal capabilities that your guests feel they must apologize for having caused you so much trouble.



Second, whatever you decide to serve, be sure the food and drink are the very best you can prepare. Whether you're having coffee and cookies or a huge buffet, use the freshest ingredients in what you prepare; keep the hot food **hot** and the cold food really **cold**. Prepare enough so that you don't worry (better a few left-overs than skimpy servings and a worried hostess). Add the garnishes that make your food look as good as it tastes, and set a pretty table — whether you're using heirloom silver and china or bright contemporary paper plates and napkins. In short, take time for the extra touches that let your guests know you cared enough about them to make entertaining them a very special occasion.

Finally, and perhaps most important, be sure you really want to have a party — take care of "obligations" some other time. Invite people you really like and care about and want to be with so that your party preparations can become a "labor of love". Schedule things to leave a little extra time for **you** — to soak in the tub, dress leisurely, do a last minute check of the house and table, light the candles and — last of all — relax a minute in anticipation of the delight of your own party and the people who are coming. Then, when you open your door to them, the joy of friendship and love, the true Christmas spirit, will shine brighter than the tree lights and candles, and your guests will remember this party as the highlight of their holiday season.

And **that** will mean you're a very successful host or hostess. Happy holidays; happy partying!



"A Caroling We Will Go"

A good many years ago, I substituted during the month of December for the regular teacher of first graders in our Sunday School. The little ones, having listened to the teenagers' plans to go caroling, begged to go too. So, with the help of their parents, I agreed to take them on a late-afternoon outing. Well, the music that day wouldn't have won an award, but the children's happiness and the warmth of the reception they got would have. We ended the day with hot chocolate and cookies at my house before delivering the happy, sticky-faced and sleepy youngsters to their parents. From that moment, "junior caroling" became a church tradition. And I made a lot of hot chocolate for the next few years.

During another time, I worked with teenagers and again caroling was one of the highlights of the year's activities. Again, the group gathered at our house to end the evening. Because these kids were always ravenous, more substantial food was in order and we served sandwiches with soft drinks or mulled apple juice along with the cookies.

During yet another period, I went along with the young adults of our community and joined in the caroling myself. Again, it offered the perfect opportunity to entertain and our house became the official place to end the trip. We'd come in happy and cold and ready for the really warming "adult" drinks and simple snacks I'd prepared ahead of time.

For the past few years, a number of assorted aches and pains (called "getting older") have made me prefer a warm house to a cold expedition around the neighborhood. So now the carolers come to sing for us. Standing in a slightly opened doorway, shivering a bit in the chill air, we listen to the carols — sometimes so perfect, sometimes slightly off-key, but still beautiful. Carols that bring back so many memories. . . carols that make me smile while I feel the sting of tears in my eyes. And because I remember how singing in the winter air builds up appetites in all ages, I always have a good supply of "cookies to go" on hand. We pass them around as the last notes of "We wish you a Merry Christmas" fill the air. Then our carolers rush away, munching cookies as they go, while Clay and I go inside, arm in arm, to warm ourselves with reminiscences, a cup of coffee and a cookie.

On the following pages are recipes for some of the things we've served for caroling parties in past years and a few of my favorite "cookies to go". I hope you and your carolers will enjoy them.

Perfect Hot Chocolate

Serves
12

Don't spend a lot of time worrying about what to serve the children you take caroling (you won't have time anyway — you'll be too busy keeping up with them). Just give them something you know they'll like. Hot chocolate and cookies are perfect and with the following recipes, you'll find it's easy too.

I always loved hot chocolate but always hated to make it until a friend with three young chocolate lovers taught me her way to do it. I share it now with you because it's easy to do, can be made ahead and is sinfully good.

Make-ahead Chocolate

Mix:

- 1 15 ounce can
sweetened condensed
milk
- 1 4 oz ounce bar
German sweet
cooking chocolate
- 1 cup whipping cream

Hot Chocolate:

½ cup milk for each
person being served

¼ cup Chocolate Mix
for each person

Whipped cream or
marshmallows if
desired

Put condensed milk in small heavy saucepan. Add chocolate, broken into small pieces. Place over low heat and stir constantly until chocolate melts. Remove from heat. While it is cooling, whip the cream. When chocolate mixture has reached room temperature, fold in the whipped cream. Cover and refrigerate for up to one week.

When ready to use, heat ½ cup milk for each person being served. Spoon ¼ cup of Chocolate Mix into each mug. Add hot milk and stir until blended. Top with whipped cream or marshmallows if desired.

Peanut Butter Charms

Makes approximately
6 dozen

Peanut butter cookies seem to be popular with "children of all ages", and these are doubly good since they contain both peanut butter and chopped roasted peanuts. A perfect treat for little carolers to enjoy with hot chocolate.

- 2½ cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 stick butter or margarine
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ¾ cup honey
- 2 large eggs or 3 medium eggs
- 1¼ cups roasted peanuts, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Sift together flour and baking soda and set aside. Combine butter and peanut butter and beat, with mixer on high speed, until well creamed. Beat in vanilla, sugar and honey. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir flour into batter, mixing thoroughly. Fold in chopped nuts, mixing well. Using a rounded teaspoonful of batter for each cookie, drop approximately 2" apart on lightly greased cookie sheet. With the back of a fork, flatten slightly first one way and then the other to make a criss-cross pattern. Bake 12-15 minutes. Remove to rack to cook completely before storing in tightly covered container.



Cashew Cookies

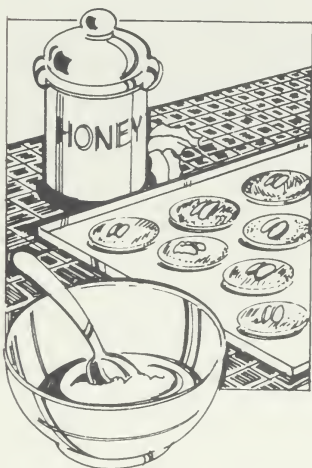
Makes
9 dozen

Cashews give these cookies a change-of-pace taste from the usual nuts used in Christmas baking and they are a really good addition to any cookie assortment.

2 cups all purpose
flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking
soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking
powder
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ sticks butter or
margarine, softened
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light brown
sugar, firmly packed
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey
1 egg
1 cup cashew nuts,
coarsely chopped
Finely chopped nuts or
cashew halves

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Sift together the flour, baking soda and baking powder and set aside. With mixer at medium speed, beat together the butter, sugar, honey and egg until light and fluffy. Turn the mixer to low and add the flour, continuing to beat until well mixed. Stir in chopped nuts. Drop rounded teaspoonsful about 2" apart on very lightly greased baking sheet. Sprinkle additional chopped nuts or a single cashew half on the top of each cookie. Bake 7 or 8 minutes, or until nicely browned.



Stuffed Pita Pockets

Nothing's better to serve a group of hungry teenagers than sandwiches. And nothing's easier than stuffed pita pockets.

If you're really energetic, you can make your own bread. If not, buy 6 "pita loaves from the bakery. To serve, cut each loaf in half and stack attractively on a platter. Surround it with bowls of two or three of your favorite fillings — or use the suggestions that follow. Add additional bowls of shredded lettuce, tomato wedges, pickles and other condiments if you wish. Have plenty of soft drinks and hot chocolate on hand, and let everyone serve themselves. For dessert, serve an assortment of holiday cookies.

Following are three of the fillings I've found successful.

Cold Meat Salad:

- 2 cups cold meat,
finely chopped (ham,
pork, chicken or
roast beef
- 3 hard boiled eggs,
peeled and chopped
- 2 tablespoons of mixed
salad pickles or 2
dill or sweet pickles,
minced
- 1 small onion, finely
chopped
- ½ tablespoon Dijon
style mustard
- Mayonnaise (enough to
bind the mixture
together and make it
the consistency you
wish)
- Pita loaves

Makes approximately 2½ cups

Mix all the ingredients together thoroughly. Cover and store in the refrigerator until ready to serve. This is better if made at least several hours prior to using so that the flavors have time to blend, but be sure that you keep it well chilled. When ready to serve, cut pita loaves in half and fill with cold meat salad.

Saucy Dogs

Makes approximately
4 cups

Made from ingredients most of us usually have on hand, this dish is equally popular with young and old. If I need a really last-minute snack for an impromptu "happy hour", I simply slice the weiners into slightly larger pieces than called for below and serve them in a chafing dish with cocktail picks. It's always a success. Prepared the following way and topped with cole slaw, Saucy Dogs are a taste-pleasing variation on the ever-popular hot dog.

- 1 6 ounce jar of Dijon style mustard
- 2 cups red currant jelly
- 24 weiners, preferably all beef, cut into slices approximately $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick

Combine mustard and jelly in a heavy saucepan over very low heat, whisking occasionally to keep the mixture smooth. When the jelly has melted and the mixture is very hot, add the sliced weiners, stirring to coat them completely. Allow them to cook in the mixture, still over low heat, for 10-15 minutes.

These can be prepared ahead up to this point. Cover and refrigerate. When ready to serve, place over low heat on the stove or in a chafing dish and serve when hot through. For Saucy Dogs, spoon into a pita pocket and top with cole slaw.



Frozen Cole Slaw

Makes approximately
3 pints

The flavor of Cole Slaw compliments many different dishes, but often seems to be "too much trouble" to make at the last minute. Here's the perfect way to keep some on hand at all times.

- 1 medium-to-large firm head of cabbage (approximately 8-10 cups when grated or shredded)
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- ¼ cup water
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 1¼ teaspoons celery salt
- 1 teaspoon mustard seed

Shred or grate cabbage into a bowl. Sprinkle the salt over it; cover and let stand for approximately an hour. In the meantime, combine the sugar, water, vinegar and spices in a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Allow to boil for one minute. Remove from heat and cool to lukewarm. Drain any liquid that has formed from cabbage, using the back of a spoon to press it out, leaving cabbage as dry as possible. Add pepper and carrots and mix. Pour the cooled syrup over the cabbage and stir until it is well mixed. Spoon into freezer containers (I prefer to use the half-pint size); seal, label, date, and freeze. When ready to use, allow the container to stand at room temperature for at least an hour or in the refrigerator overnight.



Marinated Fresh Vegetables

This is more a suggestion than a recipe. The choice of vegetables can be varied to suit your individual taste and often depends upon what is available fresh in the market at the time of your party. The marinade, too, can be changed and should be your favorite salad dressing, homemade or bottled. Regardless of how you vary it, this dish, which seems particularly good stuffed into fresh pita loaves, will be a popular one.

Vegetables/My favorites include:

Broccoli, washed and broken into small buds

Cauliflower, washed and broken into small flowerets

(both of above can be blanched in hot water for several minutes and then crisped in cold water before using, if you prefer)

Mushrooms, cleaned and thinly sliced

Sweet Peppers (red and green), cleaned, seeded and thinly sliced

Zucchini, washed (not peeled) and thinly sliced

Other choices include: green beans and peas, onions (preferably small green ones), cherry tomatoes, always-popular celery and carrots, asparagus and many more.

Dressing:

½ cup cider vinegar

¾ cup granulated
sugar

½ cup vegetable oil

1 tablespoon grated
onion

Salt and ground
pepper to taste

Mix together the vinegar and sugar in a heavy saucepan over very low heat, stirring just until the sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat. Whisk in the oil, onion and seasonings. Refrigerate until ready to combine with vegetables.



Directions:

Prepare all vegetables, dropping them in cold water to keep them crisp. When they are all ready, drain, pat dry, and put into a container with a tight lid. Pour the marinade over the vegetables, cover and refrigerate until ready to serve (at least several hours). To serve, drain, or transfer the vegetables to your serving dish or platter with a slotted spoon. Garnish with tomato wedges.

*When I'm rushed, one of my favorite marinades is a creamy Italian salad dressing marketed by Hain which is all natural, sweetened slightly by honey and which has no salt.

Irish Coffee

Serves 8

When you bring a group of your contemporaries home with you after a caroling expedition, they're usually ready for "adult" refreshments. And since you've been with them, whatever you serve needs to be something you can prepare ahead of time and simply finish up in a matter of a few minutes. My best advice is to keep it simple. Offer a choice of two hot drinks, a good cheese spread with crackers and crisp vegetables with dip. Use cookies — any of the ones in this book (or your own favorites) for dessert.

For years, Irish Coffee has been one of my favorite drinks to serve. And for years, I've made it, painstakingly, cup by cup. Only recently did I realize that it's much simpler to prepare it by the pot, and it's just as good. Remember, be sure to make two pots of coffee, so you can offer plain coffee to those who prefer it.

8 cups (5-6 ounces
each) hot black
coffee
8 teaspoons sugar*
12 ounces Irish whiskey
Sweetened whipped
cream

Combine all ingredients, except the whipped cream, stirring to be sure the sugar is well dissolved. Be sure to keep it really hot until ready to serve. Traditionally served in Irish whiskey glasses or goblets, it tastes just as good in your regular mugs. Whatever you use, rinse them in boiling water first to be sure they're hot when you pour in the coffee. Top each cup of coffee with a good-sized dollop of whipped cream and enjoy!

*Superfine sugar is generally used, I believe, though I personally prefer confectioner's sugar. Other people hold firmly that Irish Coffee should be made with brown sugar — so take your pick!

Mulled Wine

Serves
6 to 8

Mulled wine not only tastes delicious, it fills your home with the marvelous aroma of holiday spices. It also has the added advantage of keeping well. So you can make it ahead and simply re-heat it when ready to serve.

- 1 cup boiling water
- ½ cup superfine sugar
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 1 orange, sliced
- 12 whole allspice
- 12 whole cloves
- 4 pieces of stick
cinnamon (about 1 "
each)
- 1 fifth dry red wine
- 4 " cinnamon sticks
(optional)

Combine boiling water, sugar, lemon, orange and spices in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for five minutes. Add the wine and bring back to the boiling point, but **DO NOT BOIL**. Reduce heat and allow to simmer for ten minutes. At this point, the mulled wine can be cooled and stored until ready to use. To serve, bring wine back to simmering and pour into heat-proof glasses or mugs putting a slice of lemon and orange and a few spices in each mug. (If you prefer, you can strain the wine before serving and add a fresh slice of lemon and/or orange to each cup).

If you wish, add a "stirring" stick of cinnamon to each mug.



Gouda Cheese "Bowl"

Use a Gouda with red wax to give your table a real holiday look. If you're having a crowd, use a large Gouda and simply increase the other ingredients proportionately. Center it on your prettiest platter; surround it with an assortment of crackers; add a sprig of holly for garnish —and you have a table centerpiece as well as crowd-pleasing food.

- 1 10-ounce Gouda cheese, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons blue cheese, crumbled
- 2½ tablespoons butter or margarine, softened
- 1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
- 1 tablespoon finely grated or minced onion
- 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons white wine

Cut a slice off the top of the Gouda and scoop out the cheese, being careful not to cut into or break the rind. Leave outer shell about ¼ " to ½ " thick. Cover shell and refrigerate.

Grate the cheese and pour wine over it. Set aside. With mixer on medium, beat together blue cheese, butter, mustard, onion, horseradish and Worcestershire sauce until mixture is smooth. Add cheese and wine, continuing to beat until smooth.

Put the cheese into the shell, mounding it at the top and garnishing with parsley or holly. Cover and refrigerate until about an hour before serving.

To serve, surround it with an assortment of crackers and let your guests help themselves.



Herb Dip

Makes
2 cups

Nothing could be simpler than this dip, but served with fresh vegetables and chips (if you wish), it's delightfully light and fresh tasting during a holiday full of heavier treats.

- 1 cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon
Worcestershire sauce
- 3 teaspoons finely
chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon + 1
teaspoon grated or
minced onion
- 1 garlic clove, finely
minced
- Salt to taste
- Cayenne pepper or hot
pepper sauce — just
a dash (optional)

Combine all ingredients in blender or food processor and process until well blended. Cover and chill — best if refrigerated overnight. Serve with your favorite fresh veggies.



Chocolate Chunk Cookies

Makes 8
dozen

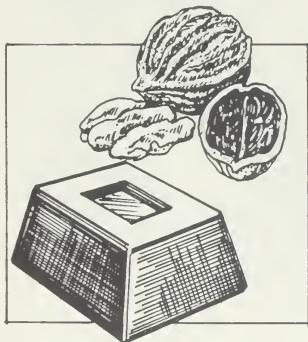
A good supply of homemade cookies will serve you well all during the holidays. . . for snacking, for gifts, for quick desserts and to serve drop-in guests. But one of the nicest reasons to keep some on hand is to have them ready when carolers, young or old, come. Say "thank you" for their thoughtfulness in bringing their music to your door by sending them off with cookies to munch on the way to their next stop.

An old recipe of my mother's, this pre-dates the mania for chocolate chip cookies. It's a bit more time-consuming than using the chocolate morsels, but well worth it. If you like America's favorite cookie, you'll love these. And they're great to pack into tins for gifts as well as to give departing carolers as a "thank you" for singing.

- 2 sticks of butter or margarine, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all purpose flour sifted
- 1 pound of semi-sweet chocolate, cut or broken into ½ " pieces
- 1 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and continue beating. With mixer on low, add the flour, mixing until well blended. Stir in chocolate and nuts. Batter will be stiff. Place rounded tablespoonsful 3½ " to 4 " apart on lightly greased baking sheet. Bake 12-15 minutes, or until edges are lightly browned. Transfer to a rack for cooling — cookies are large, so use a spatula for this. When completely cool, pack in tightly covered container.



Oatmeal Softies

Makes 4
dozen

These cookies were "born" in my search for a way to make oatmeal cookies (which my husband likes) that did not get hard and crisp when cool (which he doesn't like). These are large, not very pretty cookies. But they are so good that you find it hard — as with the proverbial potato chip — to eat just one. Make two batches so you'll have some to keep and some to give away.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup vegetable shortening
- 1 cup all purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups quick rolled oats
- 1 egg beaten
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup molasses
- 4 tablespoons sour cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup raisins (optional)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped nuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Melt shortening over low heat and set aside to cool. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, spices and sugar. Stir in the rolled oats. In a small separate bowl, beat the egg, using a rotary beater or wire whisk. Add melted shortening, molasses and sour cream, beating until well blended. Pour over dry ingredients and stir with a wooden spoon to mix. Stir in raisins and nuts. Chill for 15 to 30 minutes. Drop by teaspoonsful onto lightly greased or foil lined cookie sheets about $2\frac{1}{2}$ " apart. Bake 10 to 12 minutes. Cookies will spread and be soft and slightly puffy. Remove from oven and place baking sheet on wire rack to cool or slide foil lining off onto wire rack and re-line the pan for the next batch of cookies. When cookies have cooled for several minutes, loosen from pan with a spatula and allow to cool completely before handling.

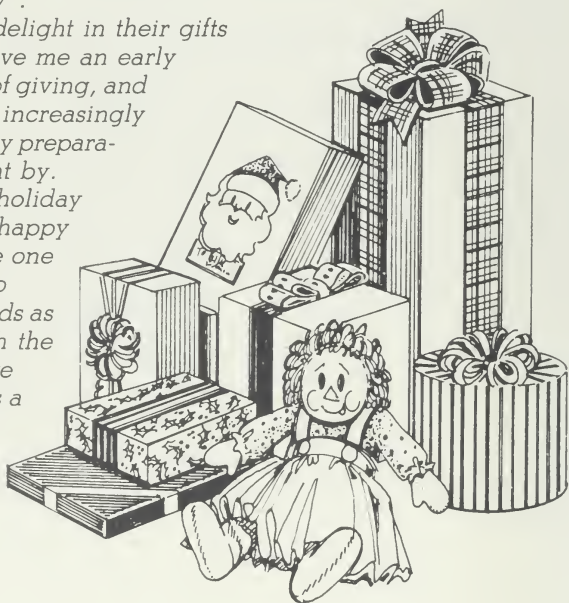
Christmas Brunch

When I was young I was blessed, as were most southern children of my generation, with a number of honorary "aunts" and "uncles". . . friends of the family too old to be called by first names, too dear to be addressed as "Mr." or "Mrs.". Since many of them were quite elderly and some had little family close by, mother always included them in our holiday festivities. So, Christmas Brunch (only then, she called it simply "late breakfast") became a tradition in our family.

On Christmas, we'd get up early and munch ham biscuits or sweet rolls while we opened "Santa Claus" and family presents. Then when it reached what mother called "a decent hour", dad and my older brother would be dispatched to pick up our guests. Mother and my sister would busy themselves in the kitchen while I cleared away our early morning "mess" and sorted out the presents for those who were coming. Since we were still in the tail-end of the depression, these were usually small things we'd made, but there were always several for each person. When our extra "family" arrived, there'd be hugs and kisses all around. Then, during the confusion of distributing and opening gifts, mother would disappear into the kitchen to bake the biscuits and call "Breakfast's ready".

Our older friends' delight in their gifts (and the attention) gave me an early lesson in the pure joy of giving, and their gifts became an increasingly large part of our holiday preparations as the years went by.

Because those late holiday breakfasts were such happy times, Brunch became one of our favorite ways to entertain my own friends as I grew older. Through the years, the groups have changed — sometimes a few older family friends, sometimes several of our favorite contem-





poraries, sometimes just one or two people with whom we want to spend some special time. Now it is often a day-after-Christmas event guaranteed to cure the after-Christmas "blahs".

Brunch is a versatile meal. It can be large or small. It can be an open house with drop-in guests and finger food or it can be a full buffet or sit-down meal, with almost any menu you choose. I've included my favorite traditional one of baked ham and poached eggs which can be easily completed with any number of side dishes. Have chilled drinks and one or two hors d'oeuvres ready when your guests arrive. That will give them time to visit and will let you slip away to finish last minute kit-

chen chores (kept to a bare minimum) before eating.

Whatever you decide to serve, do think about having a brunch during the next holiday season. You'll find it's a lovely, relaxing way to entertain.

Milk Punch

Makes twelve
4 ounce servings

The first time I ever tasted milk punch was in New Orleans many years ago and to this day, I'm not sure if it really tasted as good as I thought it did or if it was simply flavored, as everything else seemed to be, by the magic of that marvelous city. At any rate, I've never made any that tasted quite the same. However, I think the following is quite satisfactory and I do think it adds a festive touch to a holiday brunch.

1½ cups half and half
2½ cups whole milk
1 cup bourbon (brandy
or rum may be used,
if you wish)
1 teaspoon vanilla
extract
¼ cup superfine sugar
Nutmeg

Whisk all the ingredients together, except the nutmeg. When they are thoroughly blended, cover tightly and refrigerate until ready to use. To serve, pour into a chilled punch bowl and sprinkle generously with nutmeg.



Mimosas

Serves
12

A really spirited drink for a holiday brunch! Mimosas combine your daily quota of orange juice with a bit of the "bubbly" to put everyone in a festive mood for your party.

1½ quarts freshly
squeezed orange
juice, well chilled
2 bottles (750 milliliter
size) champagne,
chilled

For each drink, pour 4 ounces of orange juice into an 8 ounce glass, preferably a stemmed one) and top with champagne.

Be sure all your guests have one and then offer a toast to the holiday season and friendship.



Spinach Teasers

Makes 6
dozen

The most avowed spinach hater will enjoy these — especially if he doesn't know what they are! Savory little squares can be made ahead, refrigerated and served cold or reheated and served hot.

- 2 10-ounce packages
frozen chopped
spinach
- 3 tablespoons butter
or margarine
- 1 medium onion,
finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ pound mushrooms,
sliced
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bread crumbs
- 1 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ -ounce can,
cream of mushroom
soup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated
parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon dry basil
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon oregano

Preheat oven to 325° F.

Thaw spinach and press all water out to leave it as dry as possible. Set aside. In a heavy skillet, over medium heat, melt butter. Cook onions and mushrooms until onions appear translucent. Remove from heat.

In a mixing bowl, beat eggs with wire whisk. Stir in crumbs, mushroom soup, spices and two tablespoons of the cheese. Add onions and mushrooms and the drained spinach and mix thoroughly.

Grease a 9" square baking pan and spoon the mixture into it. Sprinkle rest of cheese over the top. Bake uncovered approximately 35 minutes or until "set". Remove from oven and cool on a rack. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Cut into 1" squares and serve cold or reheat for 10 minutes in a 325° oven.

Caraway/Cheese Dip

Makes 4
cups

Through the years, I've collected a lot of cheese dip recipes because they're easy to prepare, popular with most people and go with so many different things. This is one of my favorites; I hope you'll enjoy it too.

- 1 8-ounce package
cream cheese,
softened
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup whipping cream
or beer
- Additional cream or
beer, as needed
- 3 cups grated sharp
cheddar cheese
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons
caraway seed
- 1 teaspoon seasoned
salt

With electric mixer on medium, beat cream cheese with cream or beer until light and smooth. Add grated cheese, caraway seed and seasoned salt, beating until smooth. Add a little additional cream or beer if mixture appears too stiff. If not using immediately, cover and refrigerate. Remove from refrigerator in time to allow cheese to soften before serving. Serve with assorted fresh vegetables and/or chips.



Make-Ahead Poached Eggs

Although nothing adequately replaces a scrambled, poached or fried egg for breakfast (at least as far as my husband is concerned), I always hesitated to serve them for a party brunch because of the last minute attention they required. Then several years ago we were invited, by a relatively new acquaintance, for brunch and I was fascinated to sit down to hot, perfectly poached eggs when I had missed my hostess for only minutes. She was generous enough to share her secret with me and while it still seems like magic, it does work. And it does mean that you spend very little time in the kitchen the day of your party. Since any number of eggs can be prepared, I have not given numbers here — just directions.

Eggs*

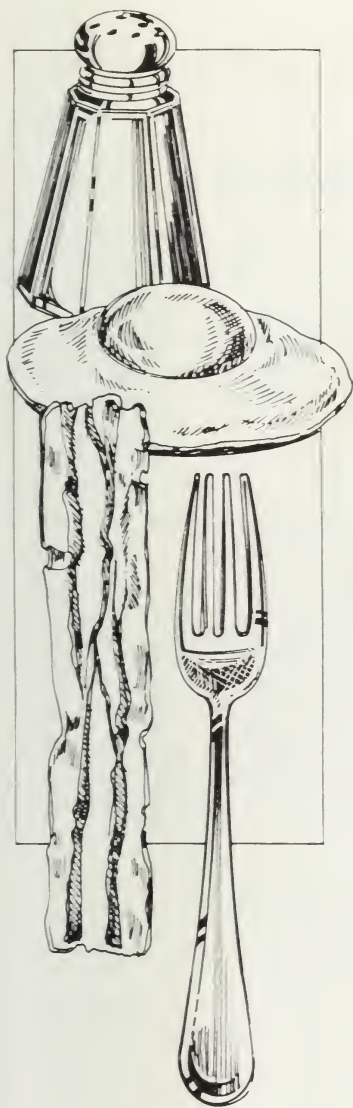
White vinegar

Salt



Since the partially cooked eggs can be refrigerated for 24 hours, you can start preparing them early on the day before the party. Fill a large skillet two-thirds full of water. Stir in 1 tablespoonful of vinegar for each quart of water used. At the same time, prepare a shallow baking dish (that will fit into your refrigerator) for storing the partially cooked eggs. Cover the bottom with ice cubes and fill half full with cold water. Place it conveniently near the eye of the range where you have placed your skillet.

Bring the water in the skillet to simmering point over medium heat. Break an egg into a saucer and slip it into the simmering water. Repeat with as many eggs as your pan can comfortably hold. Cook approximately 3 minutes, or until the white is "set", but the yolk is still soft. With a slotted spatula, remove each egg carefully from the hot water and slip it into the cold water. When the cold



dish is full, cover it tightly and store in refrigerator. If necessary, prepare another dish with ice and water and add water to the skillet, remembering to add 1 tablespoonful of vinegar for each quart of water.

About two hours before you're ready to serve the eggs, take them out of the refrigerator and carefully pour off the water, allowing them to stand at room temperature. When ready to serve, pour boiling water into the dish to cover the eggs and sprinkle generously with salt. Cover tightly and allow to stand 5 to 6 minutes (do use a timer). With your slotted spatula, transfer eggs to a heated serving platter and bring them triumphantly to the table.

*My friend also told me that she lets her eggs come to room temperature before starting. Then she plunges them into boiling water for 8 seconds and immediately immerses them in cold water. This keeps the yolk centered so that the poached eggs look as pretty as they taste.

Baked Ham

Serves
12

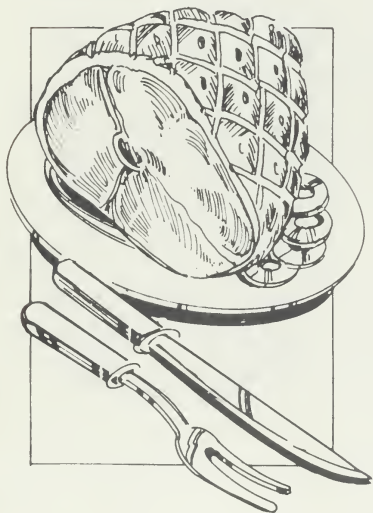
*Ham is an almost universally popular meat, yet recently it seems that many people overlook it during the holidays in a frantic search for "something different" to serve. I recommend it for several reasons. It can be served for any meal with equally satisfactory results and leftovers can be turned into such marvelous hors d'oeuvres, salads and casseroles that I sometimes bake a ham primarily to use for those purposes. It's ideal for a holiday brunch, partly because it **is** traditional and partly because it's so easy to prepare.*

1 8-pound tenderized
(ready to eat) ham
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups apple cider
1 cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons Dijon
style mustard
Whole cloves

Preheat oven to 325° F.

The texture of this type ham is quite moist, which I like. If you prefer the meat to be dryer, pierce the ham with a fork in several places before baking. With a sharp knife, cut away the brown skin (up to the shank end). Place it, fat side down on the rack of a shallow roasting pan. Pour cider over it and bake, allowing 10 minutes per pound. Baste with cider from time to time.

Remove from oven and carefully turn the ham over, fat side up. Mix the mustard and brown sugar together and rub into the fatty surface. With a sharp knife, score fat in a diamond pattern and push a whole clove into the center of each diamond. Return to oven and continue to bake for another 5 minutes per pound or until the surface is beautifully golden. Remove from oven and transfer the ham to a platter to "rest". Carefully pour the cooking liquid into a saucepan for later use.



Sauce for Baked Ham

This is just one of many and I suspect that you already have your favorite. However, this is quite good and it's the one I usually use (mostly because my husband likes it — but then, can you think of a better reason?).

- 2 cups liquid from the ham
- ¼ cup applejack or bourbon (optional)
- ½ cup seedless raisins
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon apple cider



Cook the ham liquid, applejack and raisins together in a heavy saucepan over medium heat for 5 or 6 minutes. Add the spices and stir in the cornstarch moistened with the apple cider, whisking as you do to avoid lumps. Continue cooking over low heat for another few minutes until the sauce thickens slightly and appears translucent.

At this point, the ham can be sliced and served and the sauce passed to those who wish it. Or the ham and the sauce can be put "on hold" for later use. If I'm having it for a brunch, I usually cook the ham the day before and refrigerate it. Then I simply set it out to come to room temperature the day of the party. I make my sauce before guests arrive and keep it hot on a warmer so that it can be served hot to compliment the ham.

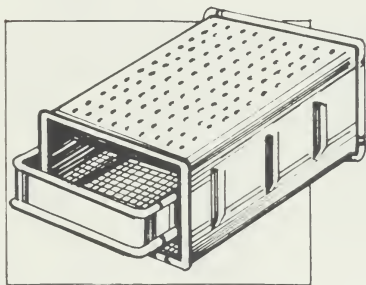
Gruyère Grits

Makes 2 qt.
casserole

Grits, a truly Southern dish, often receive instant "hate" from people not accustomed to eating them, as most southerners are, with butter or gravy for breakfast. These same people, however, have been known to be downright complimentary about grits when combined with good Gruyere or cheddar cheese in a casserole. And, it is a nice dish for brunch. Try it.

- 4 cups grits
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 stick butter or
margarine
- 3 eggs, well beaten
- 1 cup Gruyere or sharp
cheddar cheese, grated
- Salt and ground pepper
to taste

Boil the grits according to directions on the package. Preheat oven to 400°. Stir in the butter, well-beaten eggs and pepper, mixing well. Add salt if necessary. Spoon into a buttered 2 quart casserole. Add the grated cheese, stirring it into the grits. Bake approximately 15 minutes, or until top is lightly browned.



Sautéed Mushrooms and Bacon

Serves
6

Although this is a somewhat "old fashioned" dish, I love the combination of flavors and think that it is good for almost any meal. However, I especially like it for brunch. I hope you'll try it.

8 slices of bacon
2 pounds small
mushrooms
6 tablespoons bacon
drippings
6 tablespoons butter
Salt and pepper to
taste



In a heavy skillet, fry the bacon until it is crisp. Remove and place on paper towels to drain. Pour the fat into a small container for later use.

Clean the mushrooms and trim the stems even with the caps. Use them whole, or if you prefer, cut them in half. Unless you have an unusually large skillet, it will be difficult for you to cook all the mushrooms at once, so I suggest cooking one pound and holding them in a heated serving dish while you cook the second pound.

Put 3 tablespoons bacon fat and 3 tablespoons butter into the skillet and heat until bubbling. Add half the mushrooms (1 pound) and cook 6 or 7 minutes, shaking the pan off and on to move them around. When the pan appears almost "dry", they will begin to brown slightly. Watch them carefully, shaking the pan as necessary and when they are very lightly browned, transfer them to a heated serving dish.

Repeat the process with the remainder (1 pound) of mushrooms. Crumble bacon over the mushrooms and serve.

Cranberry/Apple Casserole

Serves
6 to 8

Yvonne, the pretty lady with the nice voice who answers the phone at Potpourri Press (publisher of this book), is an excellent cook and an avid collector of recipes. She is also generous in sharing them with others. I was expressing a desire for a "new" way to fix apples (my husband's favorite fruit) and Yvonne offered me this one which I've enjoyed sharing with family, guests, and now with you.

3 cups peeled and
chopped apples
2 cups raw cranberries
1¼ cup granulated
sugar
1 stick butter or
margarine, softened
⅓ cup all-purpose
flour
½ cup brown sugar
1½ cups quick rolled
oats
½ cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Wash the cranberries and combine them with the chopped apples and sugar. Spoon into 2-quart buttered casserole.

Cream together the butter or margarine, flour and brown sugar. Stir in the oats and pecans and spread over the top of the casserole. Bake 1 hour.

Angel Muffins

Makes
24

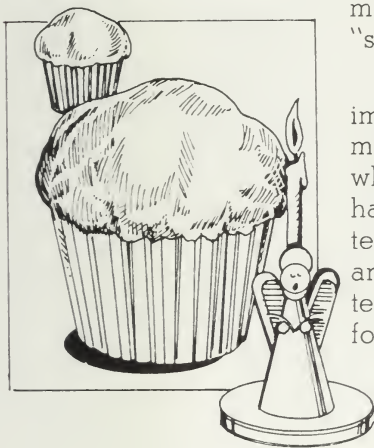
I was always fascinated by mother's ability to produce a good hot meal on the spur of the moment for unexpected company. And since my dad was inclined to issue invitations at the drop of a hat, we had a lot of unexpected company. In those days, hot bread was a "must" at any meal and when she was really rushed, mother would make these light muffins. They're quick to make and the batter can be kept in the refrigerator for several days. Because they are so good, so easy and can be made ahead, they're ideal for holiday entertaining.

1 package yeast
2 cups warm water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable oil
1 egg
4 cups self-rising flour

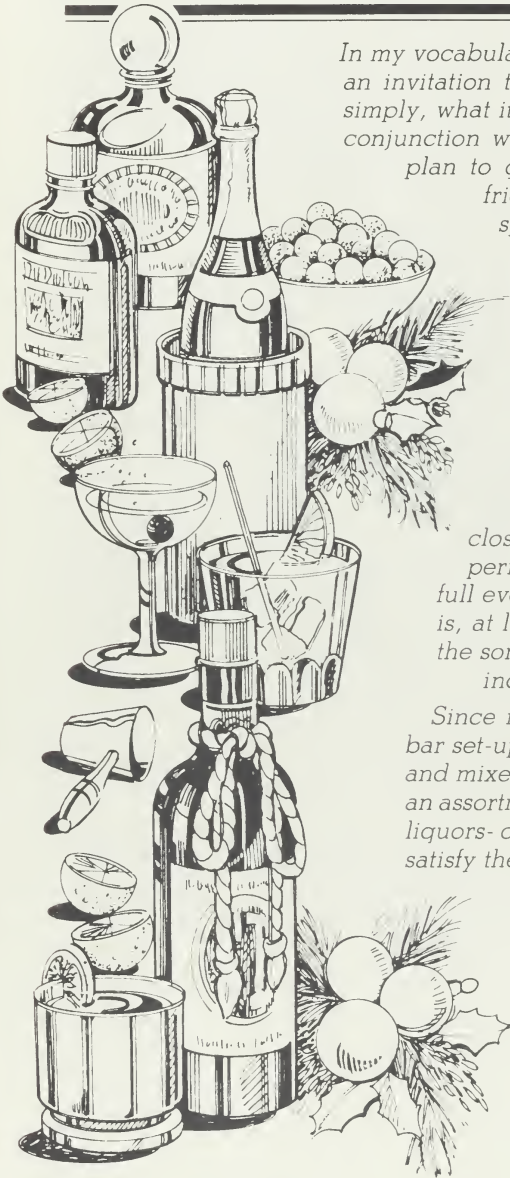
Dissolve yeast in two tablespoons of warm water. Then add the remainder of the water. Stir in the sugar, oil and egg. Mix thoroughly. Put the flour in a mixing bowl and slowly pour the liquid over it, stirring vigorously to mix thoroughly. Mixture will be a bit "soupy".

Fill greased muffin tins approximately two-thirds full and bake 15-18 minutes. Check at about 10 minutes when the muffins will have risen and have firm tops. Brush with melted butter and continue cooking until tops are golden brown. Store unused batter, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

(Note: put batter in a container somewhat larger than it appears to need, as it will expand some as it rises.)



"Come by for Drinks"



In my vocabulary, "come by for drinks" is not an invitation to a cocktail party. It is, quite simply, what it says, and it's usually issued in conjunction with another event. Perhaps we plan to go out, with a small group of friends, for a late dinner at some special place. . . or we're going to a concert, or play — whatever. In the planning, we say, "How about coming by our house for drinks first?" A time is set, and we have drinks and hors d'oeuvres at our house before going on to the main event of the evening. It's an informal, relaxed way to see a group of close friends for a relatively brief period of time while anticipating a full evening's entertainment ahead. It is, at least in our part of the country, the sort of invitation that's issued with increasing frequency these days.

Since it's an informal invitation, your bar set-up can be simple — plenty of ice and mixers, fresh lemons and limes, and an assortment of the most commonly used liquors- or at least the ones you know will satisfy the tastes of your guests. In addition, I like to include some white wine and aperitifs — vermouth (both sweet and dry), sherry, campari and creme de cassis. These are personal choices and yours may well be different.

If the host feels ambitious — or just enjoys the

job — he can easily bar tend for a small group. Otherwise, simply make everything (including the necessary drink-mixing implements) easily accessible and, as we do, let your guests mix their own.

Hors d'oeuvres can be as simple as some really good dip with chips or fresh vegetables, or as complicated as you wish to make them. I usually decide based on what else is planned for the evening and/or what I have in my refrigerator and freezer that can be prepared quickly and easily.

It's one of my favorite ways to entertain because it allows me to visit with friends without a great deal of extra time and effort being involved. I have not included drink suggestions here because it would take more space than we have to deal with that subject. What I have done is include a sampling of hors d'oeuvres which can be made ahead and frozen for last minute baking or thawing. . . or "goodies" that can be assembled out of things usually kept in the refrigerator or cabinet.

If you don't feel you have time or resources to plan a more formal party during the holidays, don't deny yourself the pleasure of entertaining. Invite a group of friends to "come by for drinks". It's a fun thing to do!

Country Pate'

Makes a
2 pound pate'

A delightful combination of flavors, this savory loaf will keep for up to a week, just waiting to impress your guests. Surrounded by an assortment of crackers or toast, it makes a spectacular hors d'oeuvre or a satisfying first course for dinner.

- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1/4 pound mushrooms, chopped
- 1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup sherry
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 pound finely chopped lean pork
- 1/2 pound finely chopped chicken breast
- 2 ounces ground pork fat
- 1/4 cup shelled pistachios
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1/2 pound sliced bacon
- Parsley for garnish

Heat oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms, onion and garlic and cook until tender, being careful not to let them brown. Add sherry and spices and increase heat until mixture boils. Reduce heat and simmer for five minutes.

Transfer the hot mixture to a bowl. Add pork, chicken, pork fat, pistachios, egg and parsley. Use a wooden spoon to stir until all ingredients are thoroughly mixed.

Line sides and bottom of 8" loaf pan with bacon slices, letting them hang over the edges of the pan. Pack mixture firmly into the pan and fold bacon over the top to cover. Bake 1 hour and 25 minutes. Remove from oven. Cut a piece of cardboard to fit top of pate', cover it with foil and fit it into the pan. Weight pate' with canned goods from your cabinet shelves and refrigerate until ready to serve — at least overnight.



To serve, remove cans and foil-wrapped cardboard. Dip pan in hot water briefly before running a spatula around the sides to loosen the pate.' Invert on serving platter and remove pan. Scrape off any excess fat and garnish with parsley. Serve with assorted crackers and/or toast. Add green grapes, too, if you have them — they'll give it a very special touch!

Almond Pate'

Makes approximately
1½ cups

Ask anyone what almonds and onions have in common and they'll tell you nothing. Ask my husband, and he'll say that I like to put one of these two in almost everything I cook. And it's true. I do love them both. Almonds lend themselves to so many dishes and they always seem appropriate for Christmas. (I think that probably goes back to my childhood when almonds were so expensive, we only had them during the holidays). At any rate, this is one of my favorite quick and easy spreads to serve with crackers or crudites.

- 1 8-ounce package of
Brie, rind discarded,
at room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons dry white
wine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon thyme
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup almonds,
slivered and toasted

Toast almonds in a preheated 350° oven until lightly browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool while preparing cheese mixture.

Combine all ingredients except almonds in a bowl and beat together with whisk until well blended. Mix in the toasted almonds. Pack into serving container (a stoneware crock is nice) cover and chill. Approximately an hour before serving, remove cheese from refrigerator. Serve with crackers or fresh vegetables.



Carrie's Ham & Swiss Rolls Makes 8 dozen

When my good friend (and sister-in-law) gave me this recipe a good many years ago, it quickly became a favorite. These are easy to fix, can be made ahead and frozen and they're delicious. In addition, a platter of these tiny hot rolls, garnished with a few sprigs of parsley and some cherry tomatoes, can make it appear you've been in the kitchen all day when, in reality, you moved them from your freezer to oven less than half hour before. Another "plus" for this recipe is that the ham mixture can be mounded on a platter and surrounded by crackers and crudites for an appetizer tray that will win raves.

- 1 pound baked ham,
ground
- 4 ounces Swiss Cheese,
grated
- 4 tablespoons Dijon
style mustard
- 2 tablespoons poppy
seed
- 1 medium onion,
peeled and minced
- 1 tablespoon
Worcestershire sauce
- 2 sticks butter or
margarine, melted*
- 4 packages of 2 dozen-
each small finger
rolls

Mix all ingredients (except rolls) until well blended. Using a serrated knife, slice an entire package of rolls in half, horizontally. Spread the bottom half with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the ham mixture, replace the top half, put the rolls back in the foil pan in which they were packaged; wrap with plastic wrap and then with freezer wrap and seal tightly. Label and date. Repeat with remainder of rolls.

When ready to serve, remove from freezer. Preheat oven to 325°. Bake rolls for approximately 20 minutes, until hot through.

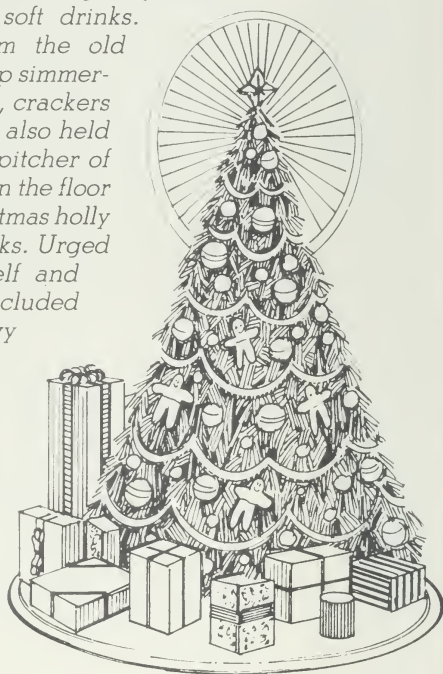
*When I plan to use this as a spread to serve with crackers and fresh vegetables, I use only 1 stick of butter or margarine and several tablespoons of beef broth (enough to bring it to the proper consistency).

Christmas "Break" Party

When I was not long out of college, a former teacher, who had become a good friend, called to ask what I was doing the Saturday before Christmas. She interrupted my recital of chores and said "Well, when you're ready for a break, come on by my house and have a bite to eat". When I hesitated, she added "Don't dress — come as you are. Everybody does — all day!! Since that sounded a little vague to me, I questioned time, only to be told "Oh, just come whenever you're tired and ready to eat — but be warned — it's nothing fancy". It was, to say the least, an unusual invitation, so I accepted.

My friend threw open the door for me when I arrived that Saturday and my first — and lasting — impression was that I had landed in a cross between a Soup Kitchen, a neighborhood work-along, and a "dressy" party. A group of students from a nearby college were putting up an enormous tree in one corner of the room, surrounded by boxes of tinsel, lights, decorations, huge bowls of steaming soup and mugs of cold beer and assorted soft drinks.

Following the enticing odors from the old fashioned kitchen, I found pots of soup simmering on the stove and baskets of bread, crackers and cheese on a nearby table which also held an enormous coffee pot, a thermos pitcher of cold milk and a few bottles of wine. On the floor was a tin tub, gaily painted with Christmas holly and filled with ice, beer and soft drinks. Urged on by my hostess, I helped myself and wondered over to join a group that included a young couple dressed in heavy coveralls (just back from cutting their Christmas tree), an impeccably dressed couple who explained they'd just been to a wedding, and a few other assorted people. Across the room, a very sophisticated looking lady (a junior executive on her lunch hour) was deep in conversation with a guy in slightly grimy work clothes (the plumber who had been called for an emergency and urged to stay



for the party). Involved in conversation with an exchange student from a local college, I heard a peal of laughter and looked up to see my hostess greeting the most disreputable looking man I'd ever seen. He turned out to be one of the city's leading young bachelor attorneys who'd been cleaning out his basement when hunger pangs reminded him of this invitation. Totally fascinated, I suddenly realized I'd stayed several hours longer than I'd intended — something I discovered most everyone did at these famous "Saturday Soups".

I went to many more of those parties in the years that followed; met a lot of interesting people and had a lot of fun times, but the pictures and memories of that very first one are still printed indelibly in my mind. This unique woman's "break-time" Saturdays were always a marvelous mix of good simple food, interesting people, intriguing conversations and a absolute lack of formality.

It is a formula I still recommend. You'll find your friends will love the idea of taking a break from their holiday chores or shopping to enjoy some good food, good company and good conversation. Following are recipes for some terrific soups and breads. If you're looking for something different — and easy — to do, try a Christmas "break time" party. You may find you've started a tradition your friends won't let you stop.

New England Cheese Soup

Serves
8

I first tasted this wonderfully full flavored soup more years ago than I like to count when a college friend, discovering my passion for cheese, made her "specialty" for me during a weekend visit to our home. I loved it then and still do. And this creamy soup tastes far richer than it really is.

- 2 cups homemade or
canned chicken
broth
- 4 cups of milk
- 8 slices bacon
- 2 tablespoons bacon fat
- 2 tablespoons
vegetable oil
- ½ cup finely minced
onion
- ½ cup finely minced
carrot
- ½ cup finely minced
sweet green pepper
- ½ cup finely minced
celery
- 2 tablespoons all
purpose flour
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk
- 3 cups grated sharp
Cheddar cheese
- 4 tablespoons Dijon
style mustard

Put the broth and milk in separate small saucepans and place over low heat. While they are getting hot, fry out the bacon. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Measure 2 tablespoons of the fat into a large saucepan and discard the rest. Add 2 tablespoons of oil to the fat. Place over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté for 30 seconds, stirring as needed. When onion is soft, add the carrots, continuing to stir and sauté for a minute. Add the pepper and celery and sauté for another 2 minutes, continuing to stir. Sprinkle flour and dry milk over the vegetables and cook, stirring, for about a minute. Add the hot broth, whisking until the mixture is smooth. Whisk in the milk and then whisk in the grated cheese gradually, whisking until the cheese is completely melted. Whisk in the mustard and keep hot over very low heat or on a warmer until ready to serve. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish each bowl with a crumbled slice of bacon.

Fish Chowder

Serves
8

When my good friend Jean, whose husband Troy is one of the best fishermen I know, first offered me a taste of her "catfish stew", I thought "ugh", but accepted to be polite. That's all it took to "hook" me on this creamy and delicious soup. Essentially a chowder composed of potatoes, onions and white fish, it's sure to appeal to anyone who likes seafood and a few who don't. Since Jean cooks by instinct, it's difficult to get a written "recipe" from her, but years of observing, as well as helping, her making her chowder have resulted in this recipe. Even my husband Clay, who doesn't like seafood, loves it!

6 pounds white fish (we prefer catfish which we consider a delicacy but flounder or any white-fleshed fish will serve well)

1 stalk celery (with tops) finely chopped

1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped

5 pounds potatoes, peeled and diced

2½ pounds onions, peeled and diced

4 cups whole milk

2 cups half and half

1 stick butter or margarine

salt and pepper to taste

Put cleaned fish, diced onion and diced celery in a heavy saucepan. Add water to cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for approximately 20 minutes or until fish flakes away from the bone. Remove from heat. When cool, skin and bone the fish. Flake the meat and refrigerate until ready to use. Strain broth into the pot in which you plan to make the chowder.

Add the diced potatoes and onions and ½ of the stick of butter to the broth. Cook until vegetables are very well done, stirring as necessary. Add a bit of water if more liquid is needed during cooking. When vegetables are done, add flaked fish, milk, cream and remaining half stick of butter or margarine. Stir to mix thoroughly. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed. Bring the chowder to simmering point, but reduce heat to keep it from boiling. Cook for another ten minutes. Serve immediately or cool, refrigerate and re-heat for later use.

Mary's Soup-Stew

Makes approximately
10 quarts

This evolved from Brunswick Stew, a dish which in its original form contained wild game, usually squirrel or rabbit. Several states claim to have originated it, including my own North Carolina where it is still a common dish, though most people now substitute chicken for the game. Regardless of the meat they use, almost everyone who cooks it has a closely guarded secret recipe and the cooking of the stew is a fall ritual for many. It is, in this part of the country, usually cooked in large outdoor pots in quantities of 25 gallons or more. The cooking is an all-day affair which is as much a social occasion as the party that usually follows when friends are invited in to share the stew.

When we were younger, we cooked a stew each fall and I froze the leftovers for "instant meals" all winter. When we no longer did this, I really missed it and my vegetable soup began to resemble brunswick stew more closely each time I made it. My husband Clay would come in, sniff and ask "Are you making soup or stew?", and people who ate it agreed that while it was good, it really wasn't vegetable soup. But then it really wasn't brunswick stew either, so soon it became simply "Mary's Soup-Stew". It's thick and good and a nice change of pace for your taste buds during the holiday season.

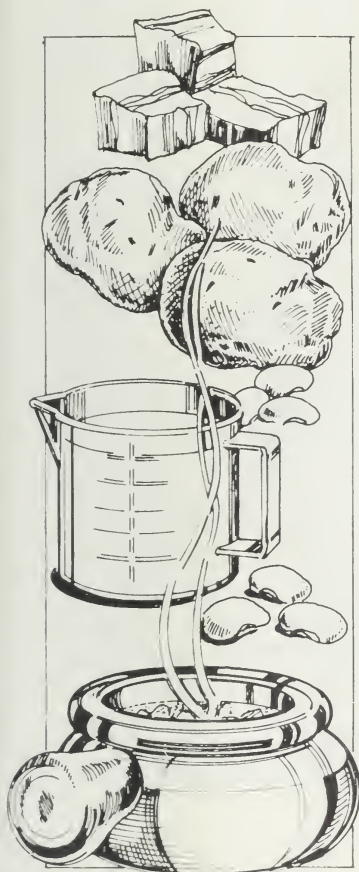
Remember, it makes approximately 10 quarts, so get out your big pot. . . or halve the ingredients.

- 1½ pounds lean stew beef
- 1½ pounds lean pork stew
- 1 3-3 ½ pound chicken (broiler-fryer)
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 5 pounds potatoes
- 3 pounds onions
- 6 cups lima beans, fresh, frozen or canned
- 5 cups corn, fresh, frozen or canned

Put beef and pork in a pot together. Cover with water, add 1 teaspoon salt and boil, covered, until meat is done. At the same time, cut the chicken into pieces and place in another pot, cover with water, add 1 teaspoon salt and boil, covered, until meat comes off the bones easily. Remove both pots from heat when meat is done. Drain the broth from both pots into the pot in which you plan to make your soup.

Add the raw vegetables to broth and cook until they are tender, stirring as needed. If necessary to add

8 cups tomatoes, fresh
or canned, mashed
slightly
1 can (6 ounces)
tomato paste
2 tablespoons
Worcestershire sauce
Salt and pepper to
taste



more liquid, add beef or chicken broth (preferably homemade, but canned will do). When raw vegetables are tender, add canned vegetables (with their liquid) and tomato paste and continue cooking until vegetables are completely done.

While vegetables are cooking, skin and bone the chicken and shred the meat. Trim any fat which may have been left on the beef and pork and shred the meat. Add the shredded meats and Worcestershire sauce to the vegetables and cook for approximately another 30 to 45 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings, adding salt and pepper as desired. Continue cooking for another 2 to 4 hours (again, depending on your particular taste) on low heat, stirring as necessary. (It's a good idea to keep the soup just barely simmering.)

When the soup is done, reduce heat to keep it hot until serving time. Or allow it to cool and refrigerate or freeze it for later use.

Since this falls in the category of those wonderful foods that improve with reheating, you can make it well ahead of the time you wish to serve it. With cole slaw or salad and crackers or crusty bread and butter, it's a complete and satisfying meal.

Creamy Onion Soup

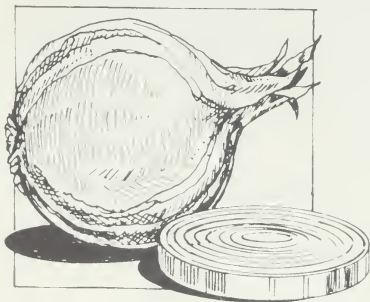
Serves 8

Mention French Onion Soup and your listener will nod his head or voice an opinion. Mention American Onion Soup and he'll probably just give you a strange look. But serve him this creamy onion soup (a really American dish) and chances are, he'll love it! If you're having a "soup party", it makes a nice contrast to the heavier soup-stew. If you're serving it alone, it's terrific with a sandwich or with some good bread and cheese.

- 2 medium-large sweet Spanish onions
- 1 stick butter or margarine
- 4 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 4 cups beef broth (preferably homemade or canned)
- 4 cups half-and-half cream
- 1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Parsley, finely chopped
- Croutons

Peel onions and slice thinly (you should have about 5 cups). Over low heat, melt the butter in a large (at least 6-quart) saucepan. Add the onion and cook, stirring as needed, until the onions appear transparent — 10 to 15 minutes. Do not let the onion brown. Stir in the flour, mixing well with the butter and onions. Slowly add the beef broth and half and half, whisking to keep the mixture smooth. Add salt and Worcestershire sauce. Continue to heat until soup is steaming, almost boiling. Reduce heat to very low until ready to serve. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Ladle into bowls, garnish with chopped parsley and pass croutons.

If you make the soup early, simply refrigerate it and reheat slowly when ready to serve.



Bread: General Observations



While there are few things better than fresh, home baked bread and the person who makes it has every right to be proud of it, please remember that it is absolutely no sin for a good cook to buy her bread, especially if there's a good bakery close by. If you're "into" bread baking and really enjoy it, by all means bake for your parties. If, however, it's a chore for you, don't waste holiday time doing it — and don't feel guilty. Shop around until you find the best places to buy the best breads. Order what you need and pick it up on the day of your party.

While I enjoy making bread, I often have trouble finding time to do it and I must admit that it is not the thing I do best in the kitchen. So my favorite recipes are usually those for quick and easy breads. And some of those are the ones I've chosen to include here.

Florence's Corn Bread

Serves 8

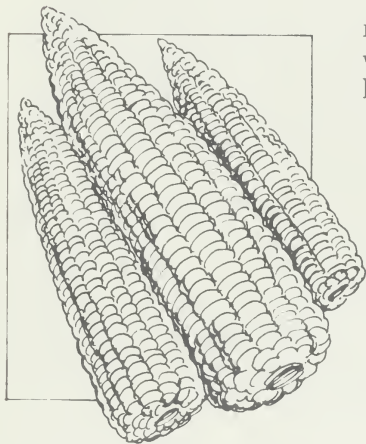
Although our busy lives go in such different directions that I don't see my good friend Florence as often as I'd like to these days, I have many recipes that she's shared with me over the years. Each time I cook one, I find the dish flavored with happy memories of good times we shared. Even without those memories, you'll find this bread exceptionally good.

- 1 cup corn meal
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 8-ounce carton sour cream
- 1 small ($8\frac{3}{4}$ ounce) can cream-style corn

Preheat oven to 425° F.

Stir together the corn meal, oil and beaten eggs, mixing well. Blend in sour cream and add the corn, mixing thoroughly.

Bake in an iron skillet for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cut in wedges and serve with plenty of sweet butter.



Quick Pumpernickel

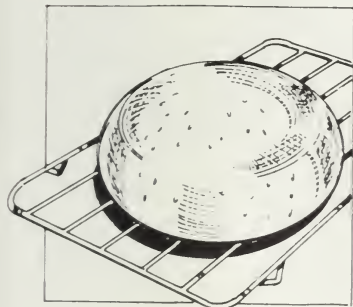
Makes 1 loaf

Some people who think I'm a good cook express surprise when they find I often use "mixes". Others who know me well know that I stay busy and am always delighted to discover a quicker and easier way to do practically anything. Not long ago, a friend came home after visiting relatives in another part of the country and announced she'd found a "wonderful new way to make really good pumpernickel bread". She was right. It's not only "wonderful", it's easy and quick and the bread—unlike many of the quick-to-make breads — keeps unusually well.

1 box hot roll mix
1 whole egg
1 egg, separated
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup rye flour,
unsifted
2 teaspoons caraway
seed
Additional caraway
seed

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Prepare hot roll mix according to directions on the package, using 1 whole egg and the yolk of the separated egg. Reserve the white. Put warm water in a separate bowl and stir the molasses into it. Add the rye flour, prepared roll mix and caraway seed. Mix together. Place in a lightly buttered bowl, cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place for approximately 45 minutes. Punch dough down, transfer to floured surface and shape into a round loaf. Place loaf on lightly greased baking pan, cover and let rise again for approximately 45 minutes. Beat the reserved egg white and brush top of loaf with it. Sprinkle with additional caraway seed. Bake 35-40 minutes. Place on rack to cool.



High Fiber Bread

Makes
1 loaf

With more and more of my friends watching their diets these days and with all of us more convinced than ever of the importance of fiber in our diets, I was pleased to discover a way to make a really good tasting loaf of bread and that's also high in fiber. It's good, cold or warm, and a nice accompaniment to soup.

1 package dry yeast
1¼ cups warm water
2 tablespoons orange
marmalade
¾ teaspoon salt
3¼ cups whole wheat
flour
½ cup bran
¾ cup old fashioned
rolled oats

Preheat oven to 375° F when ready to bake.

Put warm water in a large bowl. Add yeast, stirring to dissolve. Stir in marmalade and salt, and let stand until mixture appears "bubbly". Beat in the egg, flour and bran. Knead the dough, adding a bit more flour if necessary for handling, in the bowl until the dough will pull away, leaving the sides of the bowl clean. Reserve 1 tablespoon oats and knead the rest into the dough. Cover and set in a warm, draft-free place. Let rise until doubled in volume (approximately 2 hours). Punch down; form into a loaf to fit a lightly greased 8" x 4" pan. Brush top lightly with beaten egg white and sprinkle with reserve oats. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and bake approximately 40 minutes longer, or until loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Cool on rack.



Bacon/Beer Loaf

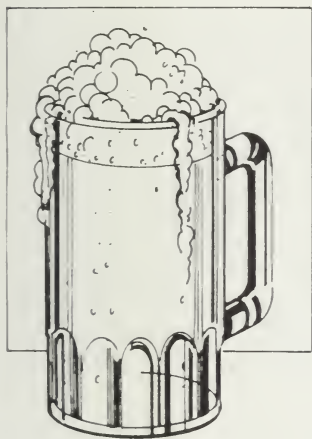
Makes 1
9" loaf

This is just one of the many quick breads using beer and self rising flour as leavening, but the addition of bacon gives this an exceptionally good flavor. It's really better eaten the day it's baked, but this is so quick to make that it's easy to do — even on a busy day.

- 1 pound bacon
- 3 cups self rising flour
- 3 tablespoons
granulated sugar
- 1 12-ounce can beer

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Cut bacon into ½ " pieces and fry in a heavy skillet over low heat until crisp. Transfer bacon bits to paper towels to drain. Put bacon in a mixing bowl with flour and sugar and stir until all bacon is coated. Add beer and stir just enough to moisten all ingredients. Put into a greased 9" x 5" x 3" loaf pan. Bake 40-50 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on rack.



Holiday Open House Buffet

Some of my happiest memories are of holiday open houses when I was a child. They are warm and happy memories of times when all the family was still together, surrounded by close friends. . . times of hugs and kisses. . . of good food and good fun. . . times filled with the pure pleasure that comes only from sharing the hospitality of one's home with good friends.

Mother, an excellent cook, was never happier than when preparing food for family and friends. Her "specialties" were legend in the community and, for a holiday party, she prepared them all — so many that our dining room table had to be stretched to its limit to hold them.

Our home, an old country house, was certainly not fine, but it was always at its best for the holidays. Greenery from nearby woods was used in abundance; the Christmas tree, which touched the 10-foot ceiling, filled one whole corner of our big living room. Fires, often needed for added heat in the somewhat drafty house, crackled in several rooms and candles glimmered everywhere. Just before the first guests were due to arrive, we'd gather in the living room, look around and agree that the house looked the prettiest it ever had. (It's a feeling I still get each year when we put up or decorations.) I learned then that no one needs a "fancy" home to entertain successfully. So please never deny yourself the pleasure of surrounding yourself with good friends because your home isn't "big enough" or "fine enough". Filled with bright decorations, warm hospitality and a loving Christmas spirit, any home is beautiful.

Each year when my husband Clay and I welcome our friends, I remember my mother and dad doing the same thing so many years ago. My 6'2" dad, dressed in his "Sunday best", would put his ever-present pipe aside to kiss each lady on the cheek while my 5'2" mother, usually in claret red velvet because it was dad's favorite) would hug the women and accept a kiss on the cheek from the men. As they stood there together, they were filled with a happiness so tangible you could almost touch it. . . such genuine joy with each other, with their family and with having their home filled with good friends. How could the party not be a success? And it always was.

With such memories, it's little wonder that an Open House Buffet became my favorite way to entertain when I had a home of my own.

Sure, it requires work. But then most successful parties do. And, done in anticipation of your party, the work can be part of the fun, too. A real "plus" for an open house buffet is that almost everything can be done before the party. Plan your menu carefully with foods that will "hold" well. . . that will be safe at room temperature or that can be kept hot or cold with serving aids such as hot trays, chafing dishes or ice-filled containers. Prepare the table the day before so that you know exactly where each dish is going. Get out everything you need and be sure that it is clean and ready to use. Set up the bar (or non-alcoholic drinks) in an area away from the table to avoid congestion. If possible, place desserts in a separate place also. Make lists so there are no last minute errands to run. And whatever you do, allow some extra time to check last minute details and relax before welcoming your guests.



Throughout the years, the physical surroundings of our parties have changed, but the spirit has always been the same. If we issued formal invitations (which we don't), they'd read "request the pleasure of your company". And that's what we always try to do — let our friends know that nothing could make us happier than having the pleasure of their company during the holidays.

I have not included complete menus — just some of the many dishes that work well for a buffet. I hope you'll enjoy trying some of them.

Roast Beef

It may not be "different" or "unusual" and you certainly won't be the first one in your circle of friends to serve it. . .but there are few things better than really good roast beef. Choose the type of roast according to personal preference, but as in buying any meat, it's helpful to know the butcher well enough so that he will advise you and select a good cut of meat for you.

A standing rib roast will probably make the most spectacular presentation, but you may prefer a rolled and tied rib roast, a tender eye of the rib roast, a boneless sirloin roast or a rump roast which, though often overlooked, is one of my favorites.

Roast of your choice
Pepper and salt

Preheat oven to 325° F.

Rub the roast with freshly ground pepper (do not salt until you're ready to take it out of the oven). Place roast on a rack in a shallow pan, insert a meat thermometer in the thickest part and roast as follows:

15 to 18 minutes per pound for rare meat (130°-140° on the thermometer)
19 to 22 minutes per pound for medium (150°-160° on thermometer)
25 to 30 minutes per pound for well done (170° on thermometer)

Salt the roast when ready to remove from the oven. Let it stand in a warm place 10 to 15 minutes before carving.

For a buffet, I really like to allow the roast to get cold (room temperature, not refrigerator-cold), slice it thinly and serve with horseradish cream or spicy mustard. If, however, you are serving beef hot, you may want to make traditional hot beef gravy to serve with it.



Roast Beef Gravy:

4 tablespoons fat (from
roasting pan)
4 tablespoons all
purpose flour
1½ to 2 cups boiling
water or
1 cup boiling water
and 1 cup hot beef
broth
Salt and pepper to
taste

In a heavy skillet, combine the fat and flour and stir until the flour browns. Add the boiling water or water and broth, whisking to keep the mixture smooth. Continue cooking over medium low heat until it thickens slightly. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cover and keep hot until ready to serve.

Horseradish Cream:

Makes 2½ cups

1 cup whipping cream
4 tablespoons lemon
juice
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon paprika
4 tablespoons grated
horseradish
6 tablespoons
mayonnaise
(optional)

Whip cream until it holds a peak. Add the lemon juice, salt, paprika and horseradish, beating continuously. Beat in the mayonnaise, if using. Chill until ready to serve.

Pineapple/Cheese Casserole

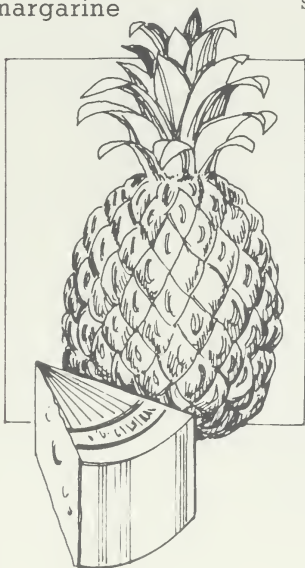
Makes
2 quart
casserole

Some cooks seem to have a gift for coming up with combinations of simple foods that are delicious, a bit unusual, and easy to prepare. Such a cook is Susan Foster, wife of Potpourri Press's Purchasing Agent Walt. Not only is she charming and attractive, she has a wealth of talents, not the least of which is her ability in the kitchen. This is one of Susan's recipes which I've used with enormous success. It's a marvelous dish to take to "potluck" suppers or to serve at buffets. Particularly good as a side dish with pork or ham!

- 2 16 oz. cans chunk
pineapple, drained
- 1½ cups granulated
sugar
- ¾ cup all purpose
flour
- 2 cups grated sharp
cheddar cheese
- 1 stack Ritz crackers
- 2 sticks butter or
margarine

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Spread pineapple in a 2 quart casserole. Mix together the sugar, flour and grated cheese. Add to casserole, mixing into the pineapple. Crush crackers and spread over top of pineapple/cheese mixture. Melt butter or margarine and pour over crackers. Bake 30 minutes. Can be served hot or cold.



Three Bean Salad

Makes
5 cups

A bit different from most versions of Bean Salad, this one doesn't contain green beans, but I think you'll like it. I like to serve it on a bed of shredded lettuce and garnish it with ripe olives — you may prefer another way. But do try it. It's another good dish for the holidays because it can be prepared as much as two days ahead and only improves with refrigeration.

Salad:

- 1 16-ounce can
navy beans
- 1 16-ounce can
kidney beans
- 1 10-ounce package
frozen lima beans
- 1 medium onion

Cook lima beans in lightly salted water until tender. Drain cooked lima beans and canned beans and combine in large mixing bowl. Peel and slice the onion thinly and add to the beans. Refrigerate while making the dressing.

Dressing:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon minced
onion
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried
oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon parsley
flakes
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon +
1 teaspoon honey
- Salt & Pepper to taste

In a food processor or blender, combine all the dressing ingredients and process until smooth and creamy. Pour over bean mixture and mix gently but well with a wooden spoon. Cover tightly and refrigerate overnight (or up to two days).

When ready to serve, transfer beans to a serving dish with a slotted spoon.

Annabelle's Seven Layer Salad

There are other versions of Seven Layer Salad but this one, the first I ever tasted is, I think, the best of them. Annabelle (who, incidentally is in charge of Customer Service at Potpourri Press, the company that published this book) shared this recipe with me a number of years ago and it's been one of my favorites ever since. In addition to being delicious, it's the only green salad I know of that not only can be, but must be, made 24 hours before it's served. While it's perfect to take to a "covered dish" or "potluck" meal, it can — carefully made in a straight-sided glass souffle dish — be a beautiful addition to your holiday buffet.

Quantities can be varied to make anything from an individual serving to a salad that fills the largest bowl you own. So I give you simply a list of ingredients and some directions.

Lettuce
Cucumbers
Onions
Canned green peas
(tiniest available)
Bacon
Cheese
Mayonnaise

Tear lettuce into bite size pieces and layer in bottom of your dish. Slice cucumbers (peeled or unpeeled, as you prefer) and layer on top of the lettuce. Peel and thinly slice onions and layer on top of cucumbers. Drain canned green peas and layer over onions. Crumble crisply fried bacon in a layer over the peas. Cover the bacon with a layer of grated sharp cheddar cheese. At this point, if you are using a deep dish, you will want to repeat the layers. When dish is nearly full, top cheese layer with a thick layer ($\frac{3}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ ") of mayonnaise. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate. When ready to serve, garnish the top with strips of sweet green pepper, pimento, cherry tomatoes or any other vegetable garnish of your choice. Or top with a sprinkling of finely grated cheese or crumbled bacon.

"Carrots? — I Don't Believe It!" Makes 6 cups

That's what people who think they don't like carrots say when they first taste this dish. Marinated carrots are pretty; they're good; and they're better after they've been marinated for several days so you can make them well ahead of a busy party day. And if you have leftovers, they'll keep, easily, for two weeks or longer in the refrigerator.

2 pounds fresh carrots
or

2 1-pound cans
sliced carrots,
drained

1 large onion

1 medium sweet
green pepper

1 can (10¾ ounces)
tomato soup

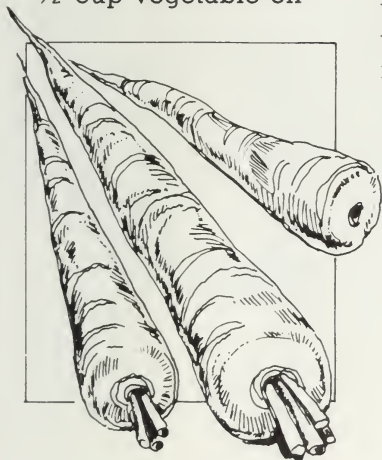
½ cup vinegar

½ cup granulated
sugar

½ cup vegetable oil

Scrub, slice and cook carrots. Drain and cool. (Or simply open cans and drain.) Peel the onion and slice thinly. Clean and remove seeds from the pepper and slice it into thin strips. Combine vegetables in a container with tightly fitted cover. Refrigerate.

In a small saucepan, combine the tomato soup, vinegar, sugar and oil. Place over low heat and bring to simmering point, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and pour over vegetables. When cool, cover tightly and refrigerate. When ready to serve, transfer vegetables to serving dish with slotted spoon.



Fruit Delight

Serves 6

This has been a holiday tradition in our house for many years. One year, I eliminated it from our annual open house buffet menu in my attempt to serve "something different" and everyone wanted to know where it was. Since then, it's been a featured item on my dessert table each holiday. It's good any way it's served, but I like it accompanied by crispy sugar cookies or thinly sliced pound cake.

Fruit Mixture:

- 1½ cups fresh
pineapple cut into
small pieces or
canned pineapple
tidbits, drained
- 1 11-ounce can
mandarin oranges,
drained
- 1 cup fresh seedless
white grapes or
canned grapes,
drained
- 1 cup thinly sliced
bananas
- 1 cup miniature
marshmallows
- ½ cup slivered
almonds, toasted
(optional)
- marachino cherries for
garnish

Dressing:

- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons lemon
juice
- 2 tablespoons
granulated sugar
- ½ cup whipping cream

Drain fruits as dry as possible. Mix together pineapple, mandarin oranges and white grapes. Cover and refrigerate. To prepare the dressing, put the beaten egg in top of a double boiler over barely simmering water. Whisk in the lemon juice and sugar and cook, continuing to whisk to keep the mixture smooth as it thickens. When it has thickened slightly, remove from heat and cool. Whip cream until it stands in stiff peaks and refrigerate. When egg/lemon mixture is cool, fold in whipped cream, blending thoroughly. Fold this into the fruit mixture; cover and refrigerate. When ready to serve, fold in sliced bananas, marshmallows and toasted nuts. Garnish with cherries, if desired.

Four Day Coconut Cake

Makes 1
8" cake

While this will never replace the made-from-scratch old fashioned coconut cake, it is equally good in its own way. It's moist, truly delicious, and not only can be — but must be — made ahead. The recipe was given to me a lot of years ago by a friend whose main problem in making it was that her teenagers kept eating the cake before the four days of aging were complete. I think she baked at least three cakes before finally getting to taste one that had aged for the full four days. Do try it. It's lovely and simple.

Cake:

1 box yellow cake mix

Filling and

Frosting:

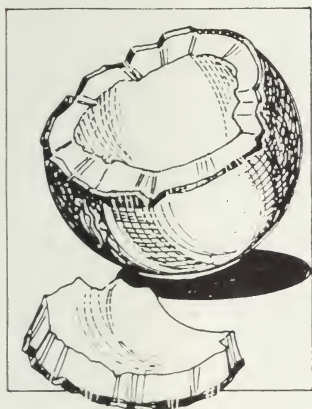
2 cups commercial
sour cream

2 cups granulated
sugar

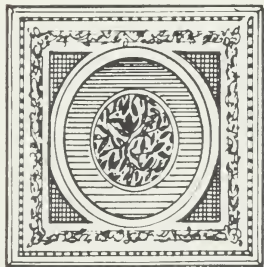
2 cups grated coconut,
fresh or frozen

Four days before serving, prepare one box of cake mix according to directions on the package and bake in 2 9" layers.

In a mixing bowl, combine sour cream and sugar, stirring until well mixed. Stir in coconut. When cake is cool, cut the layers in half horizontally to make four layers. Put one layer, cut side up, on cake plate. Spread with one-fourth of the filling. Repeat with next two layers. Place the fourth layer, cut side down, and spread the last one-fourth of the filling on top. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for four days before serving. Garnish with whole marachino cherries or sprigs of fresh holly.



Twelfth Night Celebration – “Just Desserts”



One Christmas during World War II, my brother was scheduled to get army leave (prior to going overseas) two weeks before Christmas, so we planned to celebrate early. By the time we got word in mid-December that his leave had been postponed, the tree was up, decorations were in place and lots of baking had been done.

Accepting the inevitable, we celebrated Christmas without George.

When it was over, my sister Edythe and I were ready to take down our rapidly-drying tree. But mother would have none of it. The tree was staying up until my brother came home. I watered the tree daily- and complained. My sister replaced dead greenery with fresh- and complained. And my father worried aloud about the fire hazards. But nothing moved mother. Finally Edythe, who always managed to make the best of any situation, decided we should justify all this effort by having a Twelfth Night Party.

Although we knew that January 6th (Twelfth Night) commemorates the date the three kings arrived in Bethlehem and revealed the Christ child as divine, we knew little about the festival which has its origins in pagan celebrations. A little digging yielded the fact that there was always a "King" to reign over the revelries. We also discovered that the "King" was the person who discovered in his Twelfth Night Cake a small toy symbol shaped like a king or a crown, (or an almond or bean). Variations on the theme are endless and we made up some of our own, as do I suspect, most people who give Twelfth Night parties.

At any rate, we issued our invitations for January 6th and became so caught up in our own plans that we were quite "put out" when George arrived home on the morning of the 6th and demonstrated a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for the party. Despite that, it was a memorable evening which we repeated, with variations off and on through the years. Sometimes it was a simple get-together. Other years, it was an elaborate "Masquerade" with guests invited to come in appropriate costumes. But it was always fun. I think part of its success was that it came just when people were feeling "let down" after all the holiday festivities and were ready to do something different.

As with any party, you can use the general Twelfth Night theme and tailor the party to suit your own taste and circumstances. My preference is to invite guests to come after dinner "for dessert and an evening of fun", though at times we start early with dinner, serving the Twelfth Night Cake for dessert. But it is important to have the cake relatively early in the evening, so that your "King" can be chosen to preside over the remainder of the party. If you want to be sure that you have a "King" and not a "Queen", announce before cutting the cake that should the finder of the lucky token be a lady, she may name the gentleman of her choice to be "King of Twelfth Night".

Along with one of the many versions of the traditional Twelfth Night Cake, you will find a variety of other cakes and desserts in the following pages. Certainly you will not want to serve them all on Twelfth Night, but all are good choices for any holiday party.

Regardless of what you serve, however, do think about having a Twelfth Night Party this year — it's a sure cure for January blues.



Twelfth Night Cake

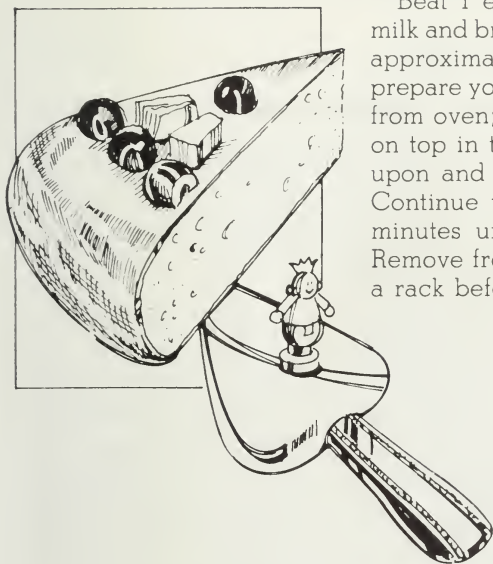
Makes 10 "
"loaf"

There are many versions of this cake, some made flat as this one, some formed into a circle, but regardless of the one that you make, it is an essential part of every Twelfth Night Celebration. And the one common element to them all is an almond, a bean or a tiny "king" shaped ornament baked into the cake. The person finding the hidden token in his slice of cake is named king or queen to rule over the evening's festivities. If you wish to be sure that you have a Twelfth Night King, announce in advance that should a lady be the lucky finder, she may name the gentleman of her choice to reign as king.

- 1 package ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce)
dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons orange
juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated
sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 6 large egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons orange
peel, preferably
freshly grated
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or
margarine, softened
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of all-purpose
flour
- 1 whole almond, bean
or toy ornament
(very small)
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 large egg yolk
- Candied fruits for
decoration

Preheat oven to 375° F.

In a small saucepan, heat the orange juice until very warm, but not boiling. Remove from heat and sprinkle the yeast over the top. Allow to stand for 5 minutes or until yeast is dissolved. In a mixing bowl, combine the sugar and 1 cup of flour. Stir in dissolved yeast, 6 egg yolks and orange peel. Beat with a wooden spoon until batter is quite heavy. Add butter and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour and continue beating until you have a stiff dough. Transfer to a lightly floured board and knead until smooth. Shape the dough, which will be quite soft, into a flat round shape approximately 9" in diameter. Punch a hole with your finger or the blunt end of a wooden spoon and press the almond into the cake, smoothing the top back over to hide it. Transfer to an ungreased baking sheet, cover and let stand in a warm place for about an hour. Cake will rise slightly, but not a great deal.



Beat 1 egg yolk with 1 tablespoon of milk and brush over surface of cake. Bake approximately 15 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare your candied fruit. Remove cake from oven; quickly place candied fruits on top in the pattern you have decided upon and return the cake to the oven. Continue to bake for another 10 to 15 minutes until cake is nicely browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool on a rack before covering and storing.

"White" Fruitcake

Makes 1
10" cake

After mother discovered that my dad, who didn't like traditional dark fruitcake, would eat her white fruitcake, she developed several different recipes which she used, according to what fruits she had available at the time. This is one that I think is particularly good and it keeps equally as well as the more traditional dark cakes.

- 1 cup Amaretti cookie crumbs (or dry macaroon crumbs or dry, very fine bread crumbs)
- 1 cup seedless white raisins
- ½ cup brandy or Cognac (or bourbon)
- 2 cups candied pineapple cut into small chunks
- 2 cups candied red or green cherries, chopped in halves or quarters
- ½ cup candied orange peel, finely diced
- ½ cup all purpose flour, sifted
- 2 cups slivered blanched almonds
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans
- ¾ pound (3 sticks) butter, softened

Preheat oven to 275° F.

Pour brandy over raisins. Cover tightly and allow to stand overnight.

Grease or butter a 10" tube pan thoroughly (do not overlook the tube). Line bottom with greased brown paper or parchment. Shake dry crumbs in the pan until all surfaces, including the tube, are completely coated.

Combine pineapples, cherries and orange peel in a very large mixing bowl. Add ½ cup flour and mix, being sure all fruit is coated, and separated. Add nuts and mix to be sure they are well coated.

In a separate bowl, with mixer on high, cream the butter and 1 ⅔ cups sugar together until it is very light and fluffy. Beat in vanilla. Add egg yolks, one at a time, beating after each addition.

Sift 3½ cups flour with the mace. With mixer on low, add the flour alternately with the milk. Before adding the last of the flour, add the raisins and brandy and then beat in the last of the flour. Stir in the lemon rind.

1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups granulated
 sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 extract
 6 large eggs yolks
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated
 sugar
 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all purpose
 flour
 1 teaspoon mace
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons finely
 grated lemon peel
 6 large egg whites
 1 teaspoon cream of
 tartar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated
 sugar



In still another bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Add cream of tartar and continue beating until they form soft peaks. Gradually add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar, beating slowly; then beat on high just until stiff peaks form. Do not overbeat.

Add butter/flour mixture to floured fruits, using a heavy wooden spoon (or your hands) to mix well. Fold in egg whites, stirring until all mixtures are thoroughly blended. Spoon into prepared pan and bake 3 to 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours or until a cake tester comes out clean. If top begins to brown too much, cover it very loosely with foil. While the cake is still hot, pat brandy into the surface and allow cake to cool on rack. When it is cool, remove from pan, but do not peel off the paper. Turn the cake right side up to completely cool. At that point, turn it over and carefully peel off the paper; then turn it right side up again. Soak cheesecloth in brandy; wrap it around the cake and then wrap in plastic wrap or foil. Store in a cool place, adding brandy from time to time to properly age the cake.

Japanese Fruit Cake

Makes 4 layer
8" cake

I don't remember where my mother got this recipe, but I do know that the first time she served it, it was a sensation. While it's no longer "new", it's still a delicious addition to any dessert table during the holidays.

- 3 cups all purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 cup raisins (optional)

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Grease and flour 4 8" cake pans and set aside. Sift together flour and baking powder and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. In a separate small bowl, beat eggs thoroughly. Add eggs slowly to butter and sugar, continuing to beat. Beat in vanilla. Add flour, alternately with milk, mixing well. Divide one-half of the batter equally between two of the 8" pans.

Add cinnamon, allspice, cloves and raisins to the remaining batter and divide it equally between the remaining two pans.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes until surface springs back when pressed or until a cake tester comes out clean. If you can only bake two layers at one time in your oven, refrigerate batter for two layers while the first two layers are baking. When cakes are done, remove to rack to cool completely before filling.

Filling:

- Juice of 3 lemons
- Juice of 3 oranges
- 2 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 16-oz. can crushed pineapple
- 1 cup grated coconut, fresh or frozen
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans



In a heavy saucepan, stir a little of the juice into the flour, mixing until smooth. Slowly add remainder of juice, stirring to keep mixture smooth. Add all other ingredients and cook over medium heat until the mixture boils, stirring as necessary. Continue to cook until filling thickens. Cool.

To assemble the cake, alternate spice and plain layers and spread one-fourth of the filling between each layer and on top of cake. If you wish, you may use all the filling between layers and frost the cake with your favorite white frosting, preferably a cooked one, such as the one for the Lady Baltimore Cake.

Aunt Phoebe's Chocolate Cake

Makes 3-layer 9" cake

My husband and I always celebrate our birthdays jointly since they fall only two days apart. Some years ago, my good friend and neighbor Iris surprised us with a huge, beautifully decorated chocolate cake for the occasion. It was delicious and got raves from everyone who tasted it. So when I called to say "thank you", I asked if the recipe was a family secret. "Oh no", Iris replied in a somewhat offhand manner. "That's Aunt Phoebe's Chocolate Cake and you're welcome to it; I'll jot it down for you." Well, she's busy and I'm busy and it was several years before she got around to jotting it down and I got around to trying it. But it was well worth the wait.

It makes a lovely addition to any dessert table and will more than delight your chocoholic friends. Do try it — either with the filling and frosting I've suggested, or with a simple chocolate glaze, or with your own favorite icing.

2½ cups all purpose
flour
2 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup butter
2 cups granulated
sugar
½ cup cocoa
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup sour milk*
1 cup boiling water

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Grease and flour three 9" layer pans and set aside. Sift together the flour and baking soda and set aside. Cream the butter, sugar and cocoa together. Add eggs one at a time, beating thoroughly until batter is light and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla. Add flour alternately with the sour milk and water, mixing well. Batter will be quite thin. Divide equally between the three pans and bake 25 to 30 minutes until the surface springs back when pressed lightly or until a cake tester comes out clean. Cool on a rack slightly before removing from pans. Then allow to cool completely before filling and frosting.

*To "sour" sweet milk, allow it to come to room temperature. Add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice or white vinegar to 1 cup of milk. Stir and let stand for about 10 minutes before using.

WHIPPED CREAM

FILLING:

- ½ cup semisweet
chocolate bits
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon powdered
instant espresso
coffee

Combine chocolate, honey and water in top of double boiler over medium heat. (Do not let water boil) Allow chocolate to melt partially; then stir until completely melted. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely at room temperature.

In a separate bowl, beat the cream and instant coffee until cream holds a peak. Carefully stir 2 to 3 tablespoons of the cream into the completely cooled chocolate to thin it. Then carefully fold the chocolate mixture into the whipped cream, blending thoroughly. Spread between the layer of the cake and refrigerate until ready to frost.

FROSTING:

- 3 ounces unsweetened
chocolate
- 3 ounces cream
cheese, softened
- ¼ cup milk
- 4 cups confectioner's
sugar

Place chocolate in top of a double boiler over medium heat. (Do not let water come to a boil.) When chocolate is completely melted, remove from heat and allow to cool. In the meantime, beat together softened cream cheese and milk. Add sugar gradually, continuing to beat. Add melted chocolate and beat until smooth and of good spreading consistency. Frost top and sides of cake and refrigerate.

Lady Baltimore Cake

Makes 3 layer
9" cake

My dad's family came from South Carolina and with them came this recipe. As with many old recipes, there are countless stories about who originated it and how it came to be named. It is sufficient for me to know that it is very, very good. And since it seems to me that it is served far less often today than when I was a child, it may be quite "new" to your guests.

- 1 cup egg whites (6 to 8, depending upon the size of your eggs)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 3½ cups cake flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt (optional)
- 1 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 2½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup milk

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Separate eggs, reserving yolks for other uses. Let whites stand until they are at room temperature. In the meantime, grease and flour 3 9" cake pans and set aside. Sift together the flour and baking powder and set aside.

With your mixer on high, beat the butter until pale in color and quite fluffy. Add vanilla. Reduce speed of mixer to medium-low and gradually add 1½ cups sugar, continuing to beat until mixture is very light. This should take about 2 minutes — do not underbeat. Fold in the flour, alternately with the milk, mixing thoroughly, but not beating.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks. Gradually add ½ cup sugar, continuing to beat until whites stand in stiff peaks. Fold egg whites into batter thoroughly blending them into the batter. Divide batter equally between the 3 prepared pans and bake 20 to 25 minutes until surface springs back when pressed or until a cake tester

Filling:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped dates
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped candied cherries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped seedless raisins
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brandy or bourbon
- 2 cups frosting (recipe follows)

Frosting:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup egg whites (5 or 6, depending upon size of eggs)
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups granulated sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon cream of tartar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



comes out clean. Cool for several minutes in the pans on a rack. Remove from pans and allow to cool completely before filling and frosting.

To prepare filling, combine all ingredients except two cups of frosting and allow to stand at room temperature approximately one hour. While you are waiting, prepare the frosting.

To make frosting, combine sugar, cream of tartar and water in a heavy saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring, until sugar is dissolved. Continue to cook without stirring until a candy thermometer registers 240° or until you can spin a thin thread from the tip of a spoon. While this is cooking, beat egg whites until they hold soft peaks. When syrup has reached the proper temperature, turn mixer on high and beat egg whites while slowly pouring hot syrup in a thin stream over them. Add vanilla and continue beating until frosting holds stiff peaks.

Add 2 cups of the frosting to the combined fruits and nuts for the filling. Mix well and divide equally between the cake layers.

Ice top and sides of cake with remaining frosting and decorate as desired.

Lord Baltimore Cake

Makes 3 layer
9" cake

Upon tasting my mother's Lady Baltimore Cake many years ago a friend from college questioned "Lady Baltimore?" and added "At home, we always have Lord Baltimore cake". It turned out that her mother was originally from Maryland where she said the recipe originated. So, to go with your "Lady", here is a "Lord".

- 2½ cups all purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon lemon extract
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- ⅔ cup egg yolks (6 or 7)
- ¾ cup milk

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Grease 3 9" cake pans and line bottoms with greased brown paper, parchment or waxed paper and set aside. Sift together flour and baking powder and set aside.

Cream the butter and extracts together and gradually add the sugar, beating until light and very creamy. In a separate bowl, beat egg yolk until thick. Add them gradually to the butter and sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add flour, alternately with milk, continuing to beat. Divide batter equally between three pans and bake 20 to 25 minutes until surface springs back when pressed or until a cake tester comes out clean. Cool on racks for several minutes. Then remove from pans and carefully peel off waxed or brown paper. Allow to cool completely before filling and frosting.



Filling:

- 1/2 cup dry macaroon crumbs
- 1/4 cups chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup chopped blanched almonds
- 1/2 cup chopped candied cherries
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon orange extract

1/2 Frosting Recipe

Frosting:

- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 3/4 cup water
- 4 egg whites
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

To prepare filling, mix all ingredients together in a bowl and let stand at room temperature while preparing the frosting.

To prepare frosting, combine sugar, cream of tartar and water in a heavy saucepan. Over low heat, stir until sugar is dissolved. Turn up heat and bring to boiling. Cook, without stirring until candy thermometer registers 240° or until you can spin a thin thread from tip of a spoon. While this is cooking, beat egg white in a separate bowl until they stand in stiff peaks. With mixer on high, pour one-half of the syrup slowly into the egg whites. Return remaining syrup to heat and cook until thermometer registers 248°. Pour in a fine stream into the frosting, continuing to beat until mixture is almost of spreading consistency. Add vanilla and continue to beat until thick enough to spread.

Divide the frosting and mix half of it into the filling mixture, stirring until it is thoroughly mixed.

To assemble cake, spread filling between layers. Then frost with remaining frosting and decorate as desired.

Golden Delicious Cheesecake

Makes 9" cheese cake

Clay, my husband, loves cheesecake and apples are his favorite fruit, raw and cooked. So it seemed natural to combine the two for him. The result is a creamy cheesecake with a fresh, different taste. Because it can be made ahead and frozen, it's ideal for holiday parties and with the poached apple topping which can be added before serving, it makes a spectacular presentation.

Crust:

- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Mix all ingredients together and press firmly and evenly in the bottom of a 9" springform pan.

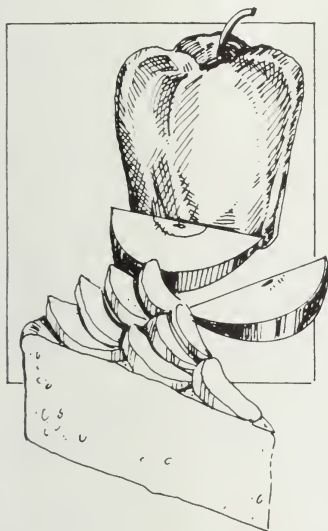
Filling:

- 24 ounces cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped golden delicious apples (peeled before chopping)

Beat cream cheese until light and fluffy. Add sugar gradually, continuing to beat. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla and chopped apples. Spoon over crust and bake 45-50 minutes. (Surface will be set and may crack slightly). Cool on rack while preparing topping. If you're planning to save this to serve later, wrap securely, label, date and freeze. Prepare topping when ready to serve.

Topping:

- 2 large golden
delicious apples
- 1½ cups apple cider
or apple juice
- 1½ teaspoons
cornstarch
- 1½ tablespoons water



Peel apples and cut in half. Core and slice. In a heavy skillet bring cider or apple juice to simmering point. Drop in sliced apples and poach until tender (approximately 10 minutes.) Remove apples from liquid with slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Arrange slightly overlapping slices around top of cheesecake, completely covering top.

In a small saucepan, stir cornstarch into water and cook over medium heat until thick and clear. Spoon glaze over apples and refrigerate cheesecake until ready to serve.

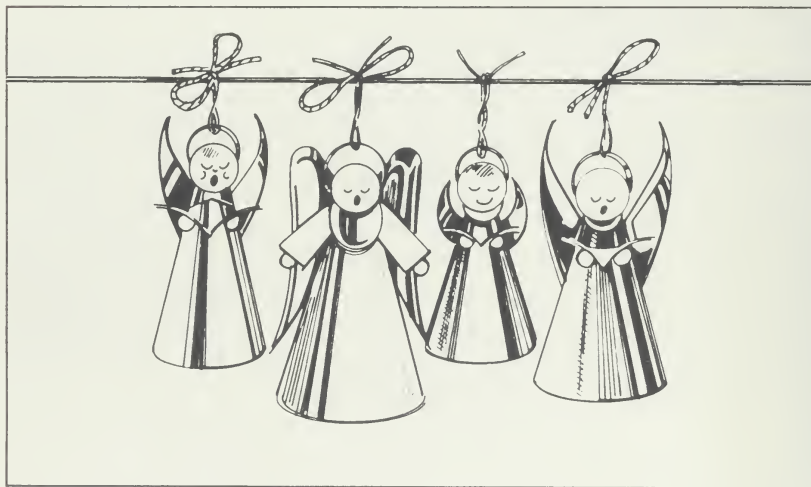
A Final Note

There are many reasons for not having a Christmas party. "There are just too many parties during the holidays". . . "I simply don't have time". . . "The house needs fixing up". . . and on and on. But none of them is valid. There are never too many holiday parties. If you're too busy for friends, you definitely are too busy. And Christmas decorations provide all the glitter and glow your home needs.

So why entertain?

We have companion cross-stitched "pictures" we hang each year. One says "The best part of the nicest part of the year is being with those you love most". The other says "The ornaments of our home are the friends that frequent it". And those are the reasons we entertain. Parties let us spend a little bit of the nicest time of the year with people we love most. And they let us decorate our home in the loveliest of all possible ways — with dear, good friends.

Happy holidays!





About The Author

A native of Greensboro, North Carolina, Mary Reynolds Smith graduated cum laude from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a degree in English-Creative Writing.

Although writing and editing was to be her profession, cooking — an interest that began as a child in her mother's kitchen — became an increasingly obsessive avocation. At an early age, she started reading her mother's collection of cookbooks and books about food the way some people read novels. As she grew older and cooked more, she read more, studied more, and continued to collect books.

A well-worn copy of Larousse Gastronomique, which has been around almost as long as she can remember, still shares space in her floor-to-ceiling kitchen shelves with books by the world's leading food and cooking authorities and great chefs, as well as community and church cookbooks, regional and specialty cookbooks, and great file boxes of newspaper and magazine clippings on interesting food facts and history.

While she progressed from writing retail advertising copy to a position as continuity editor for a radio station and on to become head of the Publication Department for one of the country's leading life insurance companies, she continued to pursue her interest in cooking.

Then, after spending several years as a free lance writer and editor, she joined Potpourri Press where her profession and avocation came together in the editing of cookbooks. This was her first step to writing a book.

This, the third in her series, is written in the same style as the first two and will be a Potpourri Press best seller. It is both fun to read and to use.

